

J. H. KOGLER, Editor.

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**HIS LAST DEAL.**

A Leaf From the Experience of a Pacific Coast Gambler.

From the Leadville Chronicle.

"I never dealt again!"

The words fell from the lips of a gentleman well known in Leadville. Yet few recognize in the easy-going, elegant man, who commands the deep respect of his fellow citizens, the once cool-headed, imperturbable gambler who in his day figured prominently along the Pacific coast, and was almost universally recognized as the shrewdest faro dealer in the West.

"As for the game's morality, that is neither here nor there. When dealt upon the square, it is much like any other game. It is not to be thought that the law will hinder a man a bit if he wants to play, and often they are forever cured when they find it does not pay. I've dealt the game for twenty years, but I've quit now. I made nothing nor lost anything, and but for a sight I once saw I should probably be a gambler yet. Hereby hangs a tale. Let me tell it:

"Some three years ago I ran a high-toned game at a certain place you probably know. For it strikes me I saw you there. It was a square game as I will leave anyone to say—a thriving game—for I dealt for half the bloods in town, and often had as many as five lay-outs at a time, with two much business on hand to get time to rest. One evening a young chap strolled in with a sort of curious stare on his face, and I concluded right then that he was green. He was a fair-headed young fellow, and had a pair of blue eyes and clean cut features—an innocent looking chap, if I ever saw one. It only required a glance to convince you that he was a stranger in a gambling room. He was soon at home though, for I saw in his blue eyes the love of play, and after that he was a constant visitor. He played his pile right up and never growled if his luck was hard—sometimes the hardest I think I ever saw. I've known him to lose at a single deal seven double shots.

"Business for me, of course, but somehow it seemed too bad. I could not say a word though, and yet I liked the boy. He had lots of the filth. I think from the way he began he must have dropped a cool \$100,000 on the game, and he never growled.

"We both quit gambling the same night, he, poor lad for sufficient reasons, and I, because I loathed the game. It was in this wise:

"His coin gave out in a deal or two, and he put up his diamond ring, just to see his luck out, you know. The chips soon went. He had a pin, a flaming stone in massive metal. He passed that in without a word, and drew \$50 in gold. So help me God, I wished him luck as heartily as any player there; but no, his last stake went my way in a losing ace. He drew \$300 more, I think, on his watch and chain, and tried his line bets again, but his luck was gone. My God! I'll never forget the pale, haggard look that crossed his face, but he was game. He never uttered a word, and kept his chair like a pillar of stone. For a moment he seemed dazed at his reverses, but suddenly his eye caught the thin, worn circle of dull gold on his little finger. He looked at it a little while and a dark wave of hot crimson blood passed over his face, for the circle seemed to cling even faster than the flashing gem he had passed in before. He at last stripped it off his finger and handed it to me. It came rather reluctantly, this worn old ring. "What can I have on this?" he asked. "I don't know what its value is, but I'll redeem it first of all."

"It might have cost five dollars when new but it was worthless then.

"Still I passed out a fifty stack in return, just to let him try again. He plunked down in the pot, and then low upon the table he laid his face on his folded arms. Well, for a wonder, his luck changed and he won three times. He took no notice of me as I told him the limit barred, and so we played twofold on each card. In the deal the pot went out and never lost. And still he lay with his face hid in his arms. The deal was out, and I shook him up, but not a muscle moved, and raising his face, for—I started back in gasty horror at the glassy expression of his eyes, for the boy was dead!

I've often wondered since that night to myself, what thoughts went flitting through his brain as he hid his

face with his bowed head from our sight; what pledges of a better life, regrets for a fortune he had thrown away with lavished hand, and loathing for his irrevocable course. Who can tell? We can but guess at them, but may never feel. His face showed years of hell endured in that brief game, but it was not until the coroner's jury sat that I learned all. Before them was developed the fact that the ring which had changed his luck, as it did his existence, was given by his dear, dead mother years before. Poor boy! I never dealt again."

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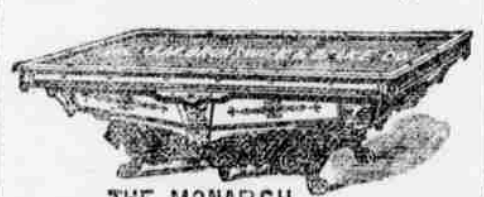
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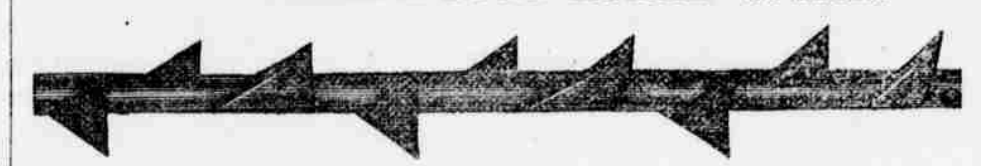
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